

I Claim:

- 1        1. In a device that alerts a user to an incoming message by activating an acoustic driver, a  
2                  method for shunting the acoustic driver comprising the steps of:  
3                      a) detecting the presence of a broadcast squelch signal by monitoring signals that  
4                          arrive at the device from an emitter; and  
5                      b) automatically shunting the acoustic driver in response to the detecting step free of  
6                          any communication back to the emitter.
  
- 1        2. The method as in claim 1, wherein the squelch signal originates extrinsic to the device.
  
- 1        3. The method as in claim 1, including the additional step of activating a vibrator to alert the  
2                  user of the incoming message while the squelch signal is being detected.
  
- 1        4. The method as in claim 1, wherein the device includes both the acoustic driver and a  
2                  vibrator, the method including the additional steps of:  
3                      accessing a memory and retrieving a user-set alert mode; and  
4                      in response to an incoming message, activating a preselected one of the acoustic  
5                  driver and the vibrator in accordance with the user-set alert mode retrieved from the  
6                  memory.
  
- 1        5. The method as in claim 1, wherein the detecting step comprises comparing incoming  
2                  signals to an expected signal pattern to detect the presence of a squelch signal.

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1 6. The method as in claim 1, wherein the detecting step comprises processing incoming  
2 signals to extract, when present, an indicium of the presence of the squelch signal and  
3 thereby detect the presence of a squelch signal.
- 1 7. The method as in claim 1, including the additional step of shunting the acoustic driver for  
2 a period of time after the broadcast squelch signal is detected.
- 1 8. The method as in claim 7, wherein the step of shunting the acoustic driver continues for a  
2 period of time after the broadcast squelch signal is no longer present.
- 1 9. For use with a device which shunts an acoustic driver which is otherwise activated to  
2 alert a user to an incoming message, a broadcast system comprising:  
3     a) a generator which outputs a "squelch" signal having a frequency which, when  
4         detected at the device, shunts the acoustic driver;  
5     b) an amplifier connected to the generator output to amplify the squelch signal;  
6     c) an antenna; and  
7     d) a transmitter connected between the antenna and the amplifier,  
8         wherein the amplified signal is transmitted from the antenna so as to define a zone of  
9         influence within which any said device has its respective acoustic driver shunted.

- 1 10. The broadcast system as in claim 9, wherein the generator and the amplifier and the  
2 transmitter are housed together.

1 11. The broadcast system as in claim 10, wherein the antenna is freely positionable remote  
2 from the transmitter.

1 12. The broadcast system as in claim 9, wherein the output of the amplifier has a variable  
2 power level setting such that the zone of influence can be varied with changes in the  
3 variable power level setting.

1 13. An electronic device of the type which alerts a user to an incoming message by  
2 connecting an alert signal to a preselected one of first and second alert devices,  
3 comprising:  
4 a) a detector which monitors the incoming message to detect the presence of a  
5 squelch signal broadcast locally by an emitter and generates a control signal at its  
6 output when the squelch signal is detected;  
7 b) a switch, operatively connected to the output of the detector, to automatically  
8 direct the alert signal to a predetermined one of the first and second alert devices  
9 while the squelch signal is being detected,  
10 wherein the electronic device operates free of any communications back to the emitter.

1 14. The electronic device as in claim 10, wherein the device is a cellular telephone.

- 1        15. The electronic device as in claim 10, wherein the device is a pager.
- 1        16. The electronic device as in claim 10, wherein the device is a personal digital assistant.

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